

Expecting the Next Coup? The Unchallenged Brazilian Military's Bargaining Power

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The civil-military relations in Brazil have faced criticism due to weak political institutions and significant military autonomy, resulting in a regression of democratisation. This article posits that the shortcomings in Brazilian civil-military relations have historical roots, with military prerogatives established in the early twentieth century and largely unopposed since that time. The military's robust corporate identity and its pivotal role in public administration and policy have granted it significant bargaining power, enabling resistance to reforms and undermining civilian authority. This paper provides evidence indicating that elected Brazilian administrations since 1995, particularly during Silva (2003–2011, 2023–) and Rousseff (2011–2016) administration, have significantly militarised the defence decision-making process and increased the involvement of the armed forces in public security, infrastructure development and public administration.

Keywords: armed forces, Brazil, civilian-military relations, defence policy, democracy, military coup.

On 21 November 2024, the Federal Police of Brazil charged 32 officials from the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019–2022) with attempting to dismantle the democratic rule of law violently. This indictment pertains to 24 military officers, comprising seven four-star generals and former commanders of the Army and Navy. Among the numerous stages of this unsuccessful coup, it is particularly notable the scheme to assassinate the elected president in 2022, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, his vice-presidential candidate, Geraldo Alckmin and Alexandre de Moraes, a judge of the Supreme Federal Court (Federal Police, 2024). In this way, Brazil contributed to the staggering number of 56 coup attempts in the twenty-first century, with 30 being successful (Kim, 2024: 23). Still, in the last 136 years of Brazilian history, it represents merely the latest endeavour in a succession of, depending on the sources and classification, six military coups, three unsuccessful attempts and at least two dozen military uprisings (de Carvalho, 2019: 24, 283).

Albeit this legacy, Silva current administration decided to take no measure against the military. It is understandable that, in his role as head of state and the Executive, he has no constitutional role in the trials conducted by the Federal Police and the Supreme Federal Court. However, by limiting this most recent coup attempt to an isolated event rather than a political-institutional problem, Silva leaves intact a list of defence reforms that successive past administrations have either abandoned or failed to solve (Amorim and Accorsi, 2022).

Brazil is a case of troubled civil-military relations (CMR). A significant part of the literature attributes that to weak political institutions and excessive military autonomy legated by the military regime from 1964 to 1985 (Stepan, 1971: 62–65; Bruneau and Matei, 2022: 214; Diamint, 2024: 54, 62–64). Moreover, a significant part also attributes the retreat of democratic consolidation to the involvement of the military in politics since the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016 and, especially, to the rise of Jair Bolsonaro and his far-right government from 2019 to 2022 (Soares, 2018; Filho, 2021; Oliveira, Kalil, and Tubino, 2023; Diamint, 2024: 63).

This article supports the view that the deficiencies in Brazilian CMR are deep-rooted and have existed since the early twentieth century, remaining largely unaddressed since then (Pinto, 2016; de Carvalho, 2019; Soares, 2024). It argues the elected civilian authorities since 1995 – and mainly in Silva (2003–2011, 2023–2024) and Rousseff (2011–2016) administrations – exhibit a dependence on the military for the execution of public administration and policy, which diminishes civilian authority's capacity to implement defence reforms, leading primarily to co-optation, accommodation and appeasement. This argument relies on Kadercan's (2013) theory of the military's bargaining power, emended by further conceptual propositions on CMR in transitional democracies, applied to new evidence from official documentation and statistics.

The military's ability to resist and obstruct changes influences the civilian authority's capacity to govern it. This arises from two sets of institutionalised components. The military possesses autonomy regarding enrollment, education, career and doctrine development, resulting in a corporate identity distinct from that of society. A second factor is the degree to which political authority depends on the armed forces to implement governance. This argument elucidates the role of Brazilian military elites in not only exemplifying military autonomy but also in actively participating in the formation of various state apparatuses, particularly through direct involvement in multiple sectors of public administration and policy, such as public security and civil construction. Consequently, they possess considerable bargaining power to oppose civilian direction, control and oversight.

This contribution employs a bargaining-theoretic framework, positing that military coup attempts and the repeated failures of civil authorities to exert control over the military stem from the incumbent ruler's insufficient bargaining power (Kim, 2024: 24, 28–29). It adds to earlier research that suggests that democratic transition and consolidation are non-linear processes hampered by a perverse institutionalisation, particularly due to the military's unchallenged reserved domains of authority (Valenzuela, 1992: 57, 62–65; Martínez, 2014: 42–43).

This paper evaluates Kadercan's emended theory within the Brazilian context by analysing the Brazilian defence sector through datasets concerning: (i) military involvement in public security; (ii) military engagement in infrastructure development and public administration; and (iii) military participation in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and defence review committees. The paper concludes that elected Brazilian governments since 1995 – particularly during the administrations of Silva (2003–2006, 2007–2010, 2023–) and Rousseff (2011–2014, 2014–2016) have favoured the militarisation of the defence decision-making process and a high level of involvement of the armed forces in other areas of public administration and policy, confirming the unchallenged bargaining power of the Brazilian military.

The Civilian and the Military Roles Within the Defence Sector

The original central question of CMR studies is how to make the military an effective defender of the state without being a threat to internal political order (Feaver, 2017: 2). Therefore, every defence policy in democracies should be concerned about using military power more effectively and responsibly (Strachan, 2014: 76).

Therefore, CMR studies deal with two broad sorts of situations. First, the military relinquishes power; the primary goal is to remove the military from politics, economics and business. Second, in post-communist regimes, the political parties typically had procedures for ruling the military, and the transition centred on taking them out of the military. In the first situation, the military has tremendous autonomy; in the second, it has too little (Barany, 2012: 341). While the cause of the transition from communist regimes boils down to a movement of civilian institutions related to the end of the Cold War, the grounds of the democratic transition from military regimes are more varied. There are four general explanations: '[...] (i) an internalized norm of commitment to civilian rule; (ii) civilian leaders have developed mechanisms to keep the military subordinate; (iii) military leaders have seized power before and are chastened by their failure at governing; (iv) military leaders have seized power and are satisfied with what they accomplished and believe they do not need the distraction anymore' (Feaver, 2017: 3).

Whatever the causes of a specific case, the characteristics of the transition and the civilian and military roles after the democratisation follow two general phases: transition and consolidation

(Barany, 2012: 344). During transition, civilians prepare against possible new coups and political interference by the military, establishing strict and precise horizons for military involvement in civilian issues. During consolidation, the civilian authority creates institutions to rule the military. Firstly, legislative control should be vested with the power to decide on declarations of war and peace, oversee the Executive's actions and military operations and impose transparency on processes for the proper control of civil society. Secondly, it is recommended that political leadership delegate the authority to a civil defence minister to make the most critical decisions regarding defence while retaining responsibility for formulating defence policy. Thirdly, civilians should assume control of allocating resources of all types. The budget should adhere to public and transparent procedures. Fourthly, civilians determine the rules of engagement, oversee personnel policy and decide on the deployment of forces abroad (Serra, 2010: 23–38; Ratchev, 2011: 22; Martínez, 2014: 36–37, 49).

However, the transition between these phases of democratisation is neither linear nor irreversible. The military tends to resist these reforms and seeks to maintain their autonomy and participation in politics through the preservation of reserved domains of authority. In other words, legal concessions and unusual institutional arrangements that allow military participation in domestic policy, immunity against purges, large defence budgets and autonomy in defining missions and force structure. Ultimately, such perverse institutionalisation blocks democratic consolidation and leads to conflicts (Valenzuela, 1992: 57, 62–65; Martínez, 2014: 42–43). Pundits and practitioners of CMR argue that democratic consolidation necessitates a shift in the military mindset from being perceived as saviours of the nation to embracing a civic culture (Serra, 2010: 53–62; Martínez, 2014: 44–49).

That understanding superseded Samuel Huntington's notion that functional differentiation and military professionalisation would suffice to foster stable and cooperative CMR (Huntington, 1957; Albright, 1980: 575). Indeed, the recent CMR studies have firmly established that democratic consolidation over the armed forces involves controlling their effectiveness (Kuehn, 2024). This has as requirements effective strategic planning based on a robust strategic planning document and an interactive and iterative civil-military decision-making process and effective institutions, assets and professionalisation (Matei, 2024: 126). However, most CMR studies focus on the reform of the armed forces and very little on the lacking of civil capacity to impose its primacy over the military (Martínez, 2014: 31; Pion-Berlin and Martínez, 2017: 6, 9).

Kadercan's theory (Kadercan, 2013) provides a coherent synthesis of the institutional foundations of military power aimed at reducing civilian interference, while also emphasising the essential reforms that need to be implemented. It builds upon previous bargaining approaches by explaining that coup attempts result from strategic interactions between the incumbent ruler and military elites (Kim, 2024). This theory posits that adverse bargaining interactions between civilians and the military can establish foundational elements that define a polity. Excessive concessions by civilians and the challenges posed by an empowered military can become characteristic of an institutional framework.

The military's bargaining power comprises two components. The primary factor is the strength of its corporate identity, which reflects how militaries delineate their identities as distinct and superior. This strength derives from the insulation of recruitment, education and career advancement. Secondly, the military's involvement in state apparatuses beyond defence policy, particularly in public administration and policy, enhances its bargaining power to resist civilian authority control. These two independent variables generate four patterns for civil-military interactions:

1. The armed forces have neither strong cohesion nor a central political role, so their bargaining conditions are inconsequential and subject to more significant civil intervention. This was the case for the European armed forces between the 16th and 18th centuries, which allowed them to have a high degree of emulation and innovation.
2. Strong corporate identity but low political centrality: the military can preserve interests but not bargain for them. Relationships are relatively stable, but defence reforms are always tricky. That would be the case of the United States.
3. The military does not have cohesion, but it has a vital role in political survival and consolidation: as a result, its bargaining resources are neither stable nor institutionalised. For this reason, CMR are unstable, with the risk of coups. These were the cases of Libya pre-Kaddafi, Iraq pre-Saddam

and most Latin American armed forces, including Brazil, from the late nineteenth to twentieth century.

4. Cohesion is substantial, and the military has a central political role. This was the case with the Turkish-Ottoman army until the nineteenth century and seemed to be the case with Brazil from the twentieth century to the present day. (Kadercan, 2013: 118, 125, 127–129)

In the European case, the state formation occurred from the fourteenth century onwards, and permanent armies formed over the next two centuries (Contamine, 2001). Therefore, in the seventeenth century, when there was administrative and bureaucratic consolidation between both and society, their leaders already gave the European military bargaining limits and autonomy (Tilly, 2007). These controlled recruitment, socialisation and career advancement inhibit the development of a solid corporate identity. This limited how much the European military could negotiate with civilian authorities even today.

In the case of South America, state formation was more irregular and incomplete (Centeno, 2003). Although the construction of military organisations was also delayed, it happened to deal more quickly with European missions – mainly French and Prussian/German – between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth – and was part of the modernisation processes if not consolidation of the South American states. There is still a consensus that the most damaging elements for the balance between civilian and military were the various and recurrent types of institutional disruption through civil wars and internal rivalries, which deformed state structures and degraded their economies (Thies, 2005; Kacowicz and Mares, 2015; Mares, 2015). From the point of view of military effectiveness, these ruptures inhibited the institutionalisation of effective defence planning. The constant political instability made this institutional development a low priority. In addition, the most significant degree of stabilisation was due to an overly large, centralising and coercive state administrative machine, with little recognition of identity or deference by society, which inhibited reforms and coordination between civilians and the military.

In the Brazilian case, the transition from the Kadercan's third to the fourth model explains the century of institutional ruptures and political crises that the country went through in the twentieth century, mainly because the Brazilian military set themselves the mission of state modernisation and economic development (Castro, 2001, 2012; de Carvalho, 2019). However, it is necessary to distinguish between the military interventions from when they finished the monarchy in 1889 and those after the authoritarian regime known as the *Estado Novo*. Until then, modernising military interventions were limited and competed with civil wars, sergeant uprisings for revindications and officer interventions for political spoils from the Old Republic to Getulio Vargas's provisional government. It was between 1937 and 1945 that all the corporate identity components and institutional prominence of the military were consolidated. In the first group, characteristics such as nationalism, anti-communism, conservatism, the prevalence of the internal enemy and the distinction between the military and civilians were defined. The authoritarian measures and purges enacted by General Gois Monteiro, Minister of War and Chief of the Army General Staff under Getulio Vargas, facilitated the amalgamation of prior military factions and agendas. As for the second group, it was during the *Estado Novo* that the military established their alliance with the Brazilian bourgeoisie and a populist project for the modernisation of Brazil. The Superior War School (*Escola Superior de Guerra* – ESG), created in 1949, played a fundamental role in this and, unsurprisingly, it coined the National Security Doctrine before the 1964 military coup (Pinto, 2016: chap. 5; de Carvalho, 2019: 14–160).

Therefore, the last Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985) did not create but operated an already existing arrangement to preserve certain elites' economic interests and set the National Security Doctrine as national policy. But it still produced further institutional deformations, such as the militarisation of the police and high military officers' engagement in extensive civil construction projects and state-owned companies like Petrobras (Campos, 2014, 2023; Ugarte, 2018: 293–300). Moreover, these were not adequately placated in the democratic transition, despite the dismissal of the National Security Council in 1994, a first defence policy in 1996 that orientated the armed forces exclusively against external threats, and the creation of the MoD in 1999. More than that, they became accentuated when Brazilian administrations depended more on the military to run the state and public policies.

Nonetheless, Kadercan's theory, while capable of explaining a diverse array of cases, was not designed to distinguish between non-democratic and democratic regimes, as well as the nuances of civil authority within each type. Subsequent adjustments are necessary to qualify the analysis of cases such as Brazil following a military regime and the most pressing reforms to reduce military's bargaining power. Notably, the militarisation of the police matters less for an autocracy and its secret police than for a regime that guarantees civil rights. The same can be said for those types of regimes where an oligarchy runs several sectors of the economy and critical infrastructures. However, the military presence in urban patrols and infrastructure development is among the most detrimental and urgent to be reviewed for a democracy in consolidation. On the one hand, these two types of unc customary activities 'de-professionalise' the military and increase its politicisation. On the other hand, as they tend to become constant functions – unlike disaster assistance, which is emergency-based – they affect the legitimacy and responsiveness of state institutions (Serra, 2010; Diamint, 2024: 65–66). Without reversing the centrality of the military, at least, in such critical areas, any further reform towards civilian primacy in the defence policymaking seems to be an endeavour of limited success, much less the lengthier and more difficult process to transform military corporate identity. Therefore, that seems to be a reasonable roadmap for reforms aimed at diminishing the military's bargaining power and enhancing democratic consolidation.

The Defence Institutions in Brazil

The defence sector in Brazil has five central bodies: the National Defence Council, the MoD, the Institutional Security Office and Congress through its foreign affairs and national defence committees, in addition to the armed forces. However, these bodies are weak institutions or have a negligible role in the defence policymaking process. Consequently, they were not able to perform democratic consolidation in Brazil beyond the phase of suppressing the military's reserved domains.

The Brazilian Constitution establishes that the National Defence Council is responsible for 'studying, proposing and monitoring the development of initiatives necessary to guarantee national independence and the defence of the democratic State' (Brazil, 1988: Art. 91, § 1, IV). The MoD has the task of the day-to-day management of national defence, guiding the armed forces and their support systems. This task begins by assessing the feasibility of the action alternatives that result from the goals and priorities established by the National Defence Council. This should institute the mechanisms capable of ordering the process of monitoring the strategic situation, choosing priorities and setting goals for defence. However, it never played the central role prescribed by the Constitution. Since its creation until 2022, the National Defence Council was activated only 15 times, nearly half of them in Cardoso administration (1995–2002), but only three in Silva and none in Rousseff's (Brazil, 2018, 2022a).

Part of the National Defence Council's lack of effectiveness is that the Institutional Security Office (*Gabinete de Segurança Institucional* – GSI) is responsible for its executive secretariat. The GSI has increasingly accumulated functions: presidential security, coordinating the crisis management office and intelligence services and coordinating transversal agendas among various agencies such as cybersecurity, nuclear safety, protection of critical infrastructures and border security. Since its creation in the Cardoso administration, it has always been chaired by an Army retired four-star general, just as senior military officers head its subordinate departments. Thus, the National Defence Council depends on a military secretariat with an executive rather than an advisory role without a civilian team to balance military views.

Consequently, the MoD formulates, executes and eventually assesses defence policy, which reflects the autonomy of the Brazilian armed forces and the lack of limited external control, which has, as its symptoms, inadequate defence documents, priorities and oversight (Pion-Berlin and Martínez, 2017: 184–187). The character of Brazilian defence ministers illustrates that their selection and retention in office are influenced more by political and personal attributes aimed at aligning military preferences rather than by expertise in defence matters (Pion-Berlin, 2005; Amorim and Accorsi, 2022).

The institutionalisation of the role of the Brazilian Congress in national defence is also insufficient. It does not compose the defence policymaking process; it only appreciates the final versions of the proposed defence documents with limited or no debate. Brazilian congressmen do not have a linked

function or adequate advice to inspect the guidelines by the Executive in defence (de Amorim, 2017: 63–64). This removes the focus and weight that Congress could have and undermines hiring qualified advisers. For instance, in 2017, of the 11 positions of available advisors, only one was occupied and the defence committees are mainly oriented by military liaison officers (Oliveira, Kalil, and Tubino, 2023: 14–15). Therefore, Congress cannot produce independent and consistent reports, leaving Brazil ineffective in defence oversight (Pion-Berlin and Martínez, 2017: 189–190; Bruneau and Matei, 2022: 218).

Moreover, Congress only redistributes resources designated for defence by the Executive, so there is a barrier to the promotion of defence spending, or its control, by congressmen. In addition, the Brazilian political system favours them to follow petty short-term interests over long-term public interests. This motivates them to support the employment of the military in non-military functions and of immediate widespread impacts, such as public security and infrastructure development. In one way or another, this deteriorates more consistent conditions for formulating defence policies that guide the essential questions of preparation and employment of the armed forces, which are long-term. This generates tensions focused on presidential decisions, which significantly impact defence in Brazil and are closely monitored by the military. Weaker presidents were forced to acquiesce to the military's demands. Presidents exhibiting decisiveness or strong congressional relationships executed institutional assignments while preserving military prerogatives. Brazilian elected presidents consistently faced a deficiency in bargaining resources, leading them to withdraw upon acknowledging their reliance on the military to manage crises and challenges in major agendas unrelated to defence.

The Reinforcement of Brazilian Military's Bargaining Power

This section introduces datasets covering military presence in (i) public security, (ii) infrastructure development and public administration and (iii) the MoD and defence review committees. Evidence indicates that the bargaining power of the Brazilian military has increased since 1995, as elected presidents have invited the armed forces to assume a central role in governance, while maintaining their corporate identity and control over the defence policymaking process.

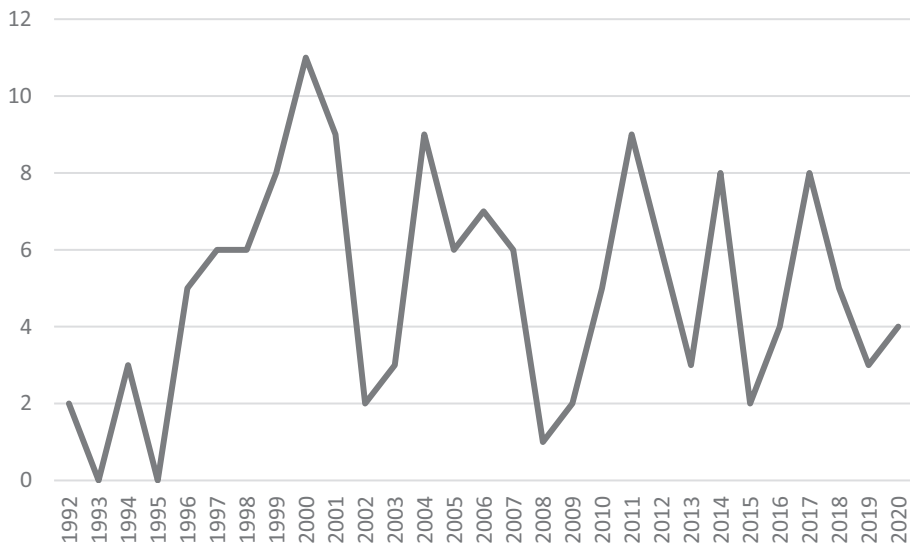
Military Involvement in Public Security

Figure 1 shows the uncontrolled use of the military in police functions started during the Cardoso administration, which authorised 55 operations called Operations of Guarantee and Order (*Operações de Garantia da Lei e da Ordem* – GLO). This use of GLOs, despite being excessive, occurred during a period of a chronic crisis of police strikes: at least 15. However, the Silva and Rouseff administrations regulated as law the extensive use of the military in public security to secure major events (Muniz and Júnior, 2007; Passos, 2019). Consequently, their administrations authorised 79 operations, 13 of which were against urban violence and eight to face police strikes, but 28 for securing major events such as the World Cup 2014 and the Olympic Games 2016. Surprisingly, these figures are much higher than those of Jair Bolsonaro's far-right government, which granted nine operations (Brazil, 2023).

Another aspect of this perverse institutionalisation was the arrangement that orientated the Brazilian armed forces within the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti from 2004 to 2014. This would function as a laboratory for the development of doctrine, procedures and experience related to military operations in public security within Brazilian cities, particularly in Rio de Janeiro. Both in Haiti and Rio de Janeiro, the results were disastrous for the local populations, as well as in the politicisation of the military. Notably, a significant number of force commanders and veterans from Haiti composed Bolsonaro's government and the recent coup attempt in Brazil (Marques, 2021; Viana, 2021).

Finally, the Silva and Rouseff administrations enacted legislation granting the military permanent police powers within a 120 km radius of the country's borders. In most cases, the Army or the Federal Police take the initiative in carrying out these operations. They are not classified as GLOs and have far fewer legal requirements and procedures. Consequently, from 1992 to 2022, the Army conducted 28 of these operations beyond 107 GLOs (Brazil, 2023: 2).

Figure 1. Operations of Guarantee and Order (GLO), 1992–2021



Source: Brazil (2023).

Army's Engagement in Infrastructure Development and Public Administration

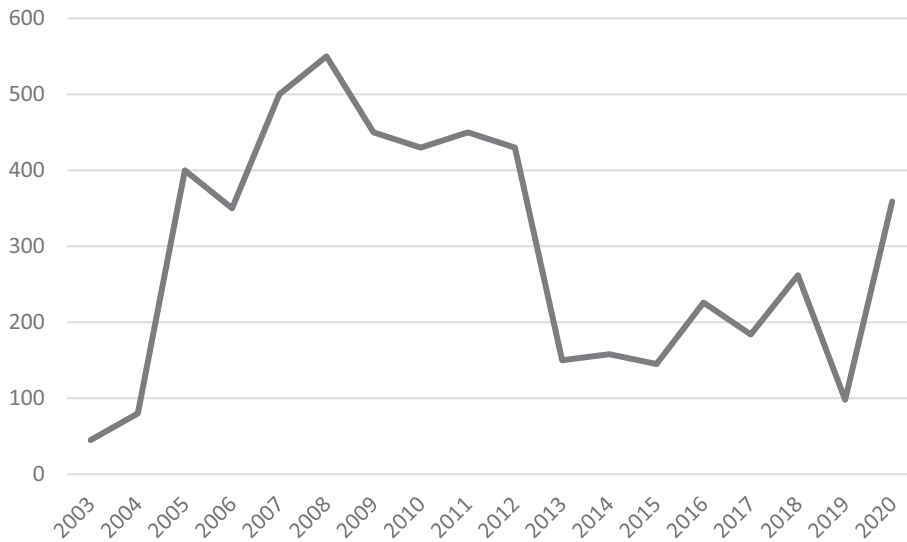
The Silva and Rousseff administrations opted to rely on the Army to establish the largest construction company in Brazil. Historically, the Army accounted for about 3 percent of the federal budget allocated to infrastructure projects, with its twelve Engineering Battalions of the Department of Engineering and Construction (DEC) restricted to minor undertakings. During the initial years of the Silva administration, the National Department of Transportation Infrastructure (DNIT) and DEC formed cooperation agreements, resulting in a more than twofold increase in the Army's budget for infrastructure projects. The expansion and modernisation of Guarulhos International Airport, the largest in Latin America, was particularly notable among various projects (Polga-Hecemovich, 2019: 35–36).

Upon assuming the role of Minister of the Civil Cabinet in 2005, Dilma Rousseff's primary objective was to oversee the ambitious economic growth acceleration programme (*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* – PAC). She promptly resolved to allocate a significant portion of the infrastructure budget to the Army in the subsequent years as well as during her administration, as can be seen in Figure 2. From 2004 to 2014, the Army employed approximately '15,000 soldiers to undertake dozens projects valued at an estimated R\$2.28 billion' (Polga-Hecemovich, 2019: 36).

That decision generated three institutional deformations. First, the civil dependence of the Army diminished post-2014, attributed to corruption scandals during the Silva and Rousseff administrations, economic contraction and political instability; however, it persists to the present day. In the most recent report on the Army's civil cooperation projects, the DEC executed 36 contracts: sixteen with DNIT, four with the Ministry of Regional Development and three with municipalities and a state government (Brazil, 2022b).

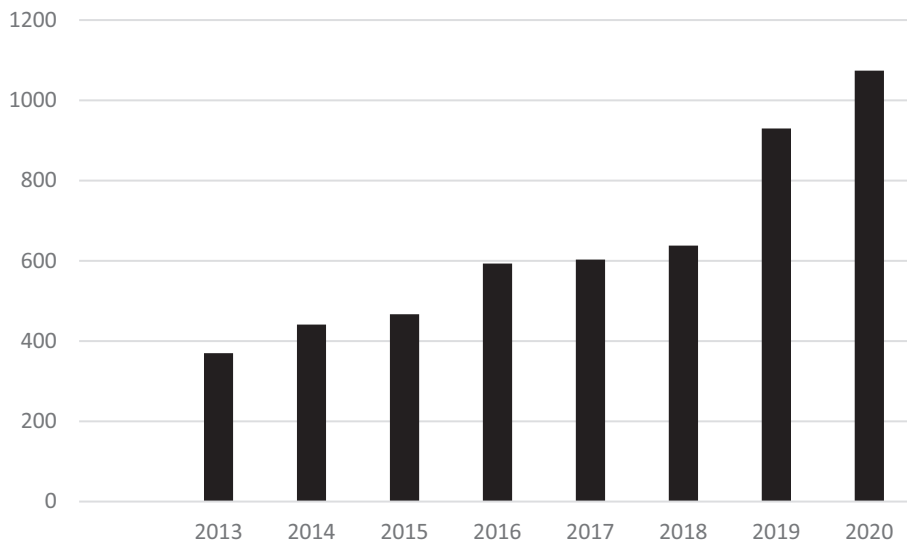
Second, Silva approved the 2005 defence policy review, prioritising the dual focus on defence and development for the armed forces (Seabra, 2014: 48–51). This rationale for increased defence expenditure and attempting to co-opt, or at least placate, the military was problematic (Jobim, 2013). This review misrepresented the need to resize the armed forces and failed to consider the prior military intervention, which was also justified on the grounds of socioeconomic development. Unsurprisingly, the National Security Doctrine's terms and concepts were revisited, yet they remain anachronistic for the twenty-first century, framing development primarily as a national security issue, thus preserving military prerogatives. This orientation has been consistently reflected in all subsequent versions of Brazil's defence documents since then.

Figure 2. Army Civilian Construction Budget



Source: Polga-Hecemovich, (2019: 39) and Cruz (2020: 18).

Figure 3. Militaries in Civilian Federal Administration Positions



Source: Schmidt (2022: 10).

A third consequence was the rate of militarisation of the civil federal bureaucracy. That is, the occupation by military personnel of typically civilian roles expanded continuously from Rousseff to Bolsonaro (see Figure 3). The database regarding these indicators is incomplete and does not provide data from before 2013. Even so, the available data show that between 2013 and 2020 the military positions in the federal administration increased 17 percent while civilian positions reduced 4 percent. More importantly, it is possible to highlight the expansion of military personnel in high commissioned positions, boards of state-owned companies and regulatory agencies (Schmidt, 2022: 7, 11–12).

Remarkably, numerous senior roles within the organising committees for the Olympic Games and World Cup have been assigned to both active and reserve military officers. General Augusto Heleno represents the most significant example. He was appointed by Rousseff to lead the Department of Corporate Communication and Education at the Brazilian Olympic Committee. He subsequently assumed leadership of Bolsonaro's Institutional Security Office and played a significant role in orchestrating the 2022's coup attempt by utilising the Brazilian Intelligence Agency for the surveillance and monitoring of both political opponents and allies (Federal Police, 2024: 8, 21, 25).

Military Presence in the Ministry of Defence and Defence Review Committees

The MoD has historically functioned as a weak institution, lacking sufficient insulation from the armed forces. Although there is no complete data on the composition of the MoD from before 2005, the evidence available in Figure 4) shows that the military controls it in absolute numbers. Furthermore, they have held most of the key positions, occupying an average of 70 percent of senior commissioned positions and 60 percent of intermediate ones in the Ministry of Defence, while civilians hold an average of 70 percent of lower commissioned positions. From an organisational perspective, the military constitutes a significant presence and holds the majority of essential positions, thereby influencing the formulation of Brazil's defence policy (Cortinhas and Vitelli, 2020: 203, 207). The pattern is evident in the military presence in the defence review committees since Silva's first administration (see Table 1).

The first defence policy was released in 1996, before the establishment of the MoD. This document was primarily declaratory rather than policy-oriented, aiming to address the gap created by the abolition of the National Security Document. The Cardoso administration prepared the defence review committee under the Secretariat for Strategic Affairs of the Presidency of the Republic, whose proposal was submitted to the Chamber of Foreign Relations and National Defence of the Council of Government. It resulted in a more balanced composition of civilians and militaries, and the deliberations garnered considerable attention from Congress and public opinion (Brazil, 1996a, 1996b).

The following defence policy review, the first under the Workers Party and after MoD's creation, demonstrated the previously noted military primacy in the Silva administration: 22 militaries and a single civilian (MoD, 2004). The next review three years later reinforced the military predominance within the MoD, despite an elusive effort to establish the civilian authority upon it, with the

Figure 4. Military Presence in the MoD



Source: Brazil (2014, 2024).

Table 1. Military Presence in the MoD's Defence Review Committees

Administration	Document	Militaries	Civilians
Silva	National Defence Policy, 2005	22	1
Silva	National Defence Strategy, 2008	6	5
Rousseff	National Defence Strategy, 2012	19	8
Rousseff	National Defence Policy, 2016	19	6
Bolsonaro	Strategic Defence Planning, 2021	13	1
Bolsonaro	White Paper, 2022	11	4
Silva	White Paper, 2024	26	3

Source: Brazil (1996b, 2007) and MoD (2004, 2008, 2015, 2021a, 2021b, 2023).

appointments of Nelson Jobim as Minister of Defence and Mangabeira Unger to the Presidential Secretariat for Long-Term Planning. Jobim enhanced the minister's authority relative to military commanders, who forfeited their positions as state ministers and their independence in the defence budget proposal; however, the military's dominance in defence policymaking remained unchanged, and Unger emphasised Brazil's reliance on the military for strategic technological advancements. Consequently, the inaugural edition of the National Defence Strategy of 2008, developed by a committee comprising civilians and military personnel under Unger's oversight, was assessed at the MoD exclusively by the military (Brazil, 2007; MoD, 2008). Furthermore, the inconsistencies in defence policy and national defence strategy, along with the discrepancies between them, serve as evidence of limited effectiveness (Proença and Lessa, 2017).

The defence policy review outside the MoD and the military control lasted shortly. A permanent system for reviewing defence documents was established during the Rousseff administration. It involved phases of analysis, drafting and oversight carried out within the MoD and its committees, all exhibiting a military predominance, including in the oversight process (MoD, 2015). Consultation with other ministries and civil agencies occurs; however, it has a limited impact on the revisions, primarily consisting of summaries of drafts submitted by each of the three forces (see, for instance, Brazil, 2020).

The Temer administration (2016–2018) faced considerable turmoil, leading to the defence documents meant for approval in 2016 being examined by Congress only in December 2018. However, it did not address the militarised defence decision-making process within the MoD. During the Bolsonaro administration, the MoD consolidated the military control. It established a permanent Strategic Defence Planning Committee to delineate defence objectives and prioritise the armed forces' projects portfolio for capacity building. The composition comprised 13 military officers and one civilian (MoD, 2021a). This resulted in eliminating or occupying the limited civilian positions within the review committees by militaries (MoD, 2022). However, in contrast to the other two types of defence documents, the review process for defence white papers remained unregulated until 2022. Notably, the composition of their review committees in 2020 included some civilians (Brazil, 2020). The occurrence was attributed to the defence white papers emphasised institutional communication and some accountability. Consequently, it was decided that updates would be conducted every four years by a committee from the MoD alongside another inter-ministerial committee.

A regulatory framework was established in 2021 that insulated the decision-making process for reviewing the defence white papers under the Special Planning Advisory of the MoD (ASPLAN). This centralised the draughting of proposals, guidelines and coordination of review committees, along with the proposal for establishing the inter-ministerial committee (MoD, 2021b). Despite this, as indicated in Table 1, the current Silva administration authorised the update of the last defence white paper by the same level of highly militarised defence review committee of his first administration shortly after the insurrection in Brasília and a failed coup attempt (MoD, 2023).

Assessment of Brazil's CMR

A comprehensive assessment of Brazil's CMR compared it to those of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay. Pion-Berlin and Martínez (2017: 9, 15) examined six dimensions: political, law, institutions,

knowledge, values and effectiveness, across three developmental stages: authoritarian, transition or consolidation and consolidated. Brazil was found to have more dimensions in transition or consolidation than other cases, with only one dimension identified as fully consolidated: the reduction of the military's political power (Pion-Berlin and Martínez, 2017: 93, 165, 187, 207, 246). However, Kadercan's theory and the newly presented evidence enable a re-assessment.

Reducing military political power in Brazil appears to be challenging, as there has been an inability to reevaluate military prerogatives related to reserved domains of authority. The growing reliance of armed forces on public security, infrastructure development and public administration has strengthened their bargaining power, leading to a notable shift in their autonomy towards active political engagement during times of instability after Rousseff's impeachment.

Progress in the legal dimension has been slow and limited, indicating that it remains in the transition phase. The necessity for a more precise delineation of the roles of the armed forces and police has been acknowledged; however, the laws governing military organisation remain unamended and military justice functions within a wholly independent framework. The observed moderated progress in the institutional dimension was ambiguous. Establishing the National Defence Council, the MoD and the Joint Chiefs of Staff has resulted in dysfunction and militarisation.

The values dimension assessed the convergence between the military and civilian sectors. The authors indicate that Brazil has made the least progress, as a significant segment of public opinion continues to exhibit tendencies towards authoritarianism. Moreover, the performance of defence knowledge development has been ambiguous. Brazil exhibits the most substantial growth in defence studies among the countries analysed. This development remains underutilised due to the military's oversight of education, and the MoD has yet to establish an adequate process for recruiting civilian specialists. Since the 1990s, there have been ongoing initiatives to establish a civilian career, which has consistently faced opposition from the military. The central administration of the MoD in Brasília is predominantly composed of active and retired military officers, along with temporarily assigned civilian officials from various federal agencies (Cortinhas and Vitelli, 2020).

Pion-Berlin and Martínez (2017: 301–306) contended that military effectiveness has evolved during the Silva and Rousseff administrations according to six criteria: strategy development and assessment, transparency and accountability, expenditure size, reduction and optimisation of military personnel, missions and the transition from conscription to a volunteer force. The assessment of Brazil's national policy documents was characterised as comprehensive and well-structured strategies for guiding policies (Pion-Berlin and Martínez, 2017: 317, 335, 340), disagreeing with a substantive share of related scholarship. The military primarily created the documents, lacking a thorough review of its self-interested policies, strategies and missions (Bruneau and Tollefson, 2014). Secondly, the drafting, implementing, and evaluating of these documents have not been civilianised, primarily due to their execution within the MoD and the restricted involvement of external agencies, particularly in light of the political instability since 2016 (de Amorim, 2017). Third, any authority overseeing the three military services did not adhere to these documents in an institutional capacity, which exhibited strong resistance to external reform initiatives (Proença and Lessa, 2017: 2–3).

Conclusions

The Brazilian democracy requires two comprehensive reforms to reduce the military's bargaining power. This requires establishing or enhancing additional public policy institutions, especially those focused on public security and infrastructure development, to reduce the dependence on the military. The second category of reform involves effective defence management, characterised by the systematic and continuous formulation, implementation and assessment of defence policy with civilian primacy. This includes the recruitment, training, and advancement of officers while reducing the significant autonomy of the armed forces, which contributes to their cohesion and normative detachment.

Nevertheless, the current administration, like its predecessors, is reluctant to pursue this course. It opts instead to transfer the political consequences of military demotion stemming from the recent coup attempt to the judiciary, which does not absolve the executive branch of its responsibilities. In this context, accommodation and appeasement appear to be the prevailing norms. This approach fails

to address the critical issues of CMR in Brazil and instead postpones them, potentially until after the next successful military coup.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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